

[By Seung Min Kim](#)

House Democrats are taking their outrage with Bank of America's new debit-card fees straight to the Justice Department.

Several liberal Democratic lawmakers on Thursday demanded an investigation into whether the nation's largest banks – including Bank of America, J.P. Morgan Chase and Wells Fargo – are coordinating efforts to raise fees for consumers, contending that would violate federal antitrust laws.

"There is clearly no problem with banks making independent business decisions based upon the landscape as they see it," the lawmakers wrote in a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder. "Antitrust issues are raised, however, if they are attempting to facilitate group decisions on their prices, terms and conditions"

Though they conceded that they had no specific evidence that banks were colluding, the lawmakers argued that having the Justice Department police the institutions could be enough to ward off rising prices for customers.

"Mr. Attorney General, check it out," said Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.). "Are the banks just hanging up the consumers and depositors by their ankles and shaking them and just get every little dime out of their pockets as they can?"

Though Bank of America – the nation's largest bank by deposits – has garnered the most public attention, other major financial institutions are making similar moves. Wells Fargo is testing a \$3 monthly charge for debit-card use, while J.P. Morgan Chase is piloting a similar fee.

Bank of America has come under congressional fire in recent days, with Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) blasting the institution for its proposed increases and telling customers to leave the bank to protest the new charge.

Durbin has been a target himself by the banks, who blame the senator and his eponymous amendment that capped the amount of swipe fees – which are charges that banks can charge retailers for processing debit cards.

The letter's signatories include Welch, Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.), Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) and Mike Honda (D-Calif.).